Setting up coal based power plant in M.P. by N.L.C.

1547. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Government of Madhya Pradesh has asked Neyveli Lignite Corporation to examine setting up a 1000 MW coal based power plant in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) if so, the steps being taken in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL): (a) and (b) Keeping in view the severe power shortage in the State of Madhya Pradesh, Ministry of Coal had written to Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC) to set up a task force to study the feasibility of setting up of a coal based power plant in Madhya Pradesh. Accordingly, NLC set up a task force consisting of senior officials of NLC. The task force held preliminary discussions with officers of State Government and Madhya Pradesh State Electricity Board (MPSEB). The State Government has conveyed its 'In Principle' acceptance for setting up the thermal power project by NLC. Final acceptance would be given by the State Government only after examining the detailed proposal and ascertaining suitability of the project from the techno-economic angle. NLC is now in the process of establishing the coal linkage for the project. After establishing the coal linkage, other activities like initial survey, preparation of feasibility report, preparation of Environment Impact Assessment report etc., will be undertaken.

(c) Does not arise in view of reply to (a) and (b) above.

Opening up coal mining to the private sector

1548. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open up coal mining to the private sector;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) its impact thereof on defence, railways etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. The Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2000 which was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 24.4.2000, seeks to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 with the following objectives:

(i) To allow the Indian companies to mine coal and lignite without the existing restriction of captive consumption;

(ii) To allow the Indian companies in the public and private sector to be engaged in exploration of coal and lignite resources in the country.

(b) The demand and supply gap of coal is increasing year by year and it is not likely that the nationalised coal companies shall be able to bridge this huge gap. It has therefore been decided by the Government to augment production of coal in the country by associating the private sector to ensure adequate availability of coal to the needy sectors and promote competition, efficiency and ensure improved quality of product and services to the consumers.

(c) Coal Mining is carried out subject to the existing rules and regulations, which address safety, problems of workers, environmental concerns and concerns related to location of defence installations etc. As for railways, the likely demand on railways for transportation of coal may go up after the private sector is allowed commercial mining of coal.

Non-recovery of electricity charges from the employees of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd.

1549. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether South Eastern Coalfields Ltd. provided residential quarters to its employees who were required to pay electricity charges beyond the consumption of 30 units per month as per the National Coal Wage Agreements;